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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: modalities for review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Statement submitted by the International Federation of Associations of the Elderly, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Preamble

The International Federation of Associations of the Elderly (FIAPA) would like to thank the Economic and Social Council for taking account of some of its proposals in what the Council adopted in plenary meeting. These proposals concerned the protection of vulnerable persons (older persons, women and children) in areas of conflict and the protection of older women, particularly in rural areas.

FIAPA is actively involved in a UNESCO committee on new information and communication technologies, and will make proposals when the committee meets on 21 and 22 February 2003 in Geneva. FIAPA intends to develop the subject introduced early this year in its English and French publication on older persons and new technologies. That was the first stage of a study on the information society,

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** The document was submitted late to the conference services without the explanation required under paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 B, by which the Assembly decided that, if a report is submitted late, the reason should be included in a footnote to the document.

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which should act as a bridge between generations.

Free copies of the publication were sent to the 140 embassies in Paris, where FIAPA is based. Other copies (in French and English) are available on request.

FIAPA congratulates the United Nations on setting up an action programme on the new information and communications technologies.

However, FIAPA would like to go further in the field of information, in accordance with the Madrid International Plan of Action adopted by the World Assembly on Ageing. FIAPA considers that it is now vital to have available the means necessary to monitor the implementation of recommendations and decisions made both in Madrid, and at the Regional Assemblies in Shanghai, Berlin and Santiago, Chile.

A motion to this effect was unanimously adopted by the 54 associations (represented by 200 delegates from 30 countries) attending the FIAPA General Assembly in Guadeloupe. The motion recommended that a global monitoring centre for ageing be set up under the auspices of the United Nations to constantly keep track of older people's needs as they develop. The monitoring centre would introduce a system for assessing policy and proposing recommendations and framework regulations to safeguard the fundamental rights of older people, and particularly those most vulnerable.

Paragraph 132 of the "Global monitoring, review and updating" section of the Madrid International Plan of Action provides that the Commission for Social Development will be responsible for follow-up and appraisal of the Plan adopted by the World Assembly on Ageing. Such reviews are critical for effective follow-up to the Assembly, and their modalities should be decided as soon as possible (paras. 116 and 117). Furthermore, a report by the Secretary-General (A/57/93) confirmed that the Commission for Social Development would be the entity responsible for follow-up.

FIAPA proposes setting up regional monitoring centres under the aegis of the United Nations. Such centres would be staffed by experts appointed by the Organization, and would monitor the development of ageing policies to safeguard the fundamental rights of older persons, and particularly of those most vulnerable. International non-governmental organizations would act as intermediaries by circulating information and providing feedback.

At the request of the European Commission, FIAPA and two European organizations (European Platform of Seniors' Organizations (EPSO) and Eurolink Age) set up the European Older People's Platform ("Age") last year in Brussels. It was chaired by FIAPA during its first year. To expand the network, FIAPA has established a European branch in Brussels, a branch in the Indian Ocean (Mauritius), and is about to establish one in West Africa (Senegal). FIAPA also has a permanent representative assigned to the Andean countries with a view to setting up a branch in Quito, Ecuador.

FIAPA's presence in 54 countries (including China, Canada and the Russian Federation) will enable it to assist the Commission in setting up regional monitoring centres, in conjunction with other international organizations.

FIAPA calls for many associations to be involved in this project in order to ensure effective follow-up to ageing policies, as requested by the World Assembly.